

Kansas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

2016 – 2017 Project Proposal

Title of the Project	Are minority students being underserved with education funding targeted to close achievement gaps?
Problem to be Addressed	Despite the fact that hundreds of millions of dollars have been allocated to close achievement gaps, many gaps are actually worse.
Background <i>(include federal jurisdiction/protected classes)</i>	<p>Eligible Kansas schools receive about \$100 million each year through the federal Title I program. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the purpose of Title I is to give schools with “high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families (funding) to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards.”</p> <p>Additionally, the state of Kansas provides at-risk funding based on those students eligible for free school lunch. According to the Kansas State Department of Education, the specific purpose of at-risk funding is to “provide at-risk students with additional educational opportunities and instructional services to assist in closing the achievement gap.” The annual Kansas at-risk dollars went from \$52 million in 2005 to \$390 million by 2015, and while the state and federal money is not exclusively targeted to minority students, they are certainly a large component of the students intended to be helped.</p> <p>Among the state’s largest districts, those which have the highest concentration of minority students also have among the highest percentage of low income students. Wichita, Kansas City, Garden City and Dodge City are examples. The latest Department of Education data also shows the poverty rate among blacks and Hispanics is roughly triple that of white students.</p> <p>Despite all the money to address the problem, achievement gaps remain significant across all available measures and the gaps are not closing. Here are a few typical examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), African American students trailed White students by 36 percentage points on 4th Grade Math Proficiency and Hispanic students trailed by 27 percentage points. Similar large gaps persist on 4th Grade Reading and 8th grade Reading and Math proficiency levels. • In the 2016 state assessments, white students outperformed African-American students by 27 percentage points and Hispanics by 21 percentage points in math (on track to be college and career ready). • 2016 ACT results show that 36% of whites tested college-ready in the four core areas. Only 8% of blacks and 15% of Hispanics tested college-ready. <p>A Kansas Policy Institute research project revealed that, by and large, state at-risk money was not spent for the targeted purpose. At-risk dollars were frequently marbled together with other funding, some at-risk dollars were targeted to non-at-risk students, and there was virtually no state oversight in how the money has been spent. In effect, at-risk money has been nothing more than a supplement to base state aid.</p> <p>A recent Brookings Institute analysis of Title I claims “there is little evidence that the overall program is effective or that its funds are used for effective services and activities.”</p>
Project Proposal	Propose ways to ensure money targeted to close achievement gaps is spent to achieve those ends.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To show how money targeted to reduce achievement gaps is actually being spent. 2. Make recommendations to ensure spending is in compliance with stated goals.
Proposed Presenters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At-risk students/families 2. Legislative analysts 3. State legislators 4. Academic researchers